NATSUMI ANDO

Something's Wrong With Us

5

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STORY

As a child, Nao met Tsubaki at Kogetsuan, the historic *wagashi* shop where her mother worked as a live-in confectioner. One fateful day, her mother was arrested on murder charges and Nao was forced to leave.

15 years later, when Tsubaki and Nao met once more, Tsubaki asked for her hand in marriage without knowing she was his childhood friend. Although Nao was unsure of Tsubaki's intentions, her desire to know her mother's true story compelled her to accept the proposal. She then began living at Kogetsuan.

With the old master accusing her of being a phony bride, and the proprietress suspicious of her identity, Nao is constantly surrounded by enemies at Kogetsuan. However, during one steamy night with Tsubaki, Nao discovered that his first love was none other than her childhood self—the girl he once called "Sakura."

In the background, the proprietress continued to pry into Nao's life, prompting Tsubaki to lock Nao away in an attempt to protect his fiancée. But Nao escaped, unaware of his intentions. Then, Tsubaki was injured in an attack meant for her.

The two finally grew closer with the success of an important tea ceremony, but now Jojima plots to ruin their relationship…

Tsubaki Takatsuki

The heir to the historic *wagashi* shop Kogetsuan. Proposed to Nao without realizing that she is his childhood friend.

Nao Hanaoka

A *wagashi* confectioner. Finds meaning in life by making *wagashi* that connect her to her late mother.

Tsubaki used to call her "Sakura" back when they were children. Seeing the color red gives her severe heart palpitations.

CHARACTERS

The Proprietress

Tsubaki's mother. She lost her husband (Tsubaki's father) 15 years ago, and has been desperate to make Tsubaki the head of Kogetsuan ever since.

Yusuke Jojima

An employee at Kogetsuan. His family runs a *wagashi* shop called Shimaya in Noto, a small town up north.

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CHAPTER 21
A New Enemy

WHEN TSUBAKI TOUCHES ME, HIS FINGER-TIPS...

...ARE GENTLE...

...AND WARM.

HF...

SOMETHING'S WRONG WITH ME.

HOW DO I FEEL HAPPY...

...IN TSUBAKI'S EMBRACE?

庵月光

Sign: Kogetsuan

TSUBAKI...!

THAT'S RIGHT.

I SLEPT WITH TSUBAKI AGAIN...

かあっ BLUSH

MM...

トゥン BA-DUMP

I HAVEN'T SLEPT THIS WELL...

IN AGES.

...MORN-ING...

ALREADY?

YOU, NAO?

...

Y-YEAH.

I SLEPT.

THIS ROOM...

WAS IT ALWAYS THIS BRIGHT?

IT'S STRANGE.

CONSIDERING HOW WE MET,

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D FALL FOR YOU.

...AND I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO GO ABOUT IT PROPERLY.

...

BUT...

...THIS IS COMPLETELY NEW TO ME...

HON-ESTLY...

I'LL SHOW YOU I CARE...

...IN MY OWN WAY.

MY HEART HURTS.

I'M LYING TO HIM.

THIS WHOLE MAR-RIAGE IS A LIE, AND YET—

...

光月

I'll

十 SHHF

Uniform: Kogetsu

AFTER ALL, YOU'RE GOING TO BE PART OF THIS HOUSE-HOLD.

KO-GETSU-AN'S UNIFORM.

IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU WORE IT, TOO.

THIS IS...

光月

I NEVER IMAGINED **THIS** IS HOW I'D GET TO WEAR IT...

THE UNIFORM MOMMA WORE...

I DREAMED OF WEARING ONE MYSELF SOMEDAY...

SCRUNCH

NAO-SAN.

はっ

GASP

THE PROPRIETRESS...

CAN YOU SPARE A MOMENT?

"BRING ME FOUR CUPS OF TEA IN THE GUEST ROOM."

"I HAVE SOME IMPORTANT FRIENDS VISITING."

"TEA?"

PLEASE EXCUSE ME.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

THE PROPRIETRESS ACTUALLY WANTS PEOPLE TO SEE ME...?

"YOU DON'T HAVE TO CHANGE. JUST HURRY."

GULP...

THIS ATMOSPHERE...

I'LL BE FINE.

EVEN I KNOW HOW TO SERVE TEA PROPERLY.

I'VE BROUGHT THE TEA.

SHE'S TRYING TO TEST ME.

OF COURSE.

WILL YOU SERVE EVERYONE?

SERVE ON THE GUEST'S RIGHT.

PLACE THE TRAY ON THE TATAMI MAT FIRST.

POSITION THE WOOD GRAIN OF THE SAUCER HORIZONTALLY.

I START WITH THE GUEST IN THE SEAT OF HONOR.

I CIRCLE AROUND SO I DON'T PASS IN FRONT OF THE ALCOVE.

THANK YOU.

...

IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME.

GOOD, PERFECT!

光月

ISN'T THAT KIMONO... SUMMER OSHIMA FABRIC?

KYOKO-SAN.

IT'S LOVELY.

IT IS. I DO PREFER *ORI* KIMONO.

I MIGHT NEED SOMETHING ELSE, SO STAY PUT.

HOLD ON.

SHE'S NOT EVEN GOING TO INTRODUCE ME, HUH?

I GUESS IT'S A GROUP FOR APPRECIATING KIMONO?

UM.

SHALL I BRING YOU A NEW CUP OF TEA?

GLUG

GLUG

ナ!!

HUH,UH

ア

WHAT?

WHAT DID I JUST DO?

I'M SO VERY SORRY!

WHAT A TERRIBLE OFFENSE!!

EXCUSE ME?

WHAT DO YOU—

U-UM...

DID I DO SOMETHING WRONG?

YOU REALLY HAVE NO IDEA?

ASKING IF A GUEST WANTS A NEW CUP OF TEA...

NAO-SAN, A WORD.

...MEANS YOU WANT THEM TO HURRY UP AND LEAVE.

OH...

I'M VERY SORRY.

BUT...

...MY MOTHER HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS.

WHAT POOR UPBRINGING.

DIDN'T *THAT MOTHER* OF YOURS...

TEACH YOU THAT MUCH?

ONE STUPID, IGNORANT COMMENT...

CAN BE ENOUGH TO RUIN A *LIFE'S* WORTH OF EFFORT.

THAT'S THE WORLD *WE* LIVE IN.

I'LL GRIP IT

TAKE IT OFF!

...!

YOU KNOW YOU DON'T DESERVE TO WEAR THIS.

RED.

BRIGHT RED...

YOU WERE RAISED POORLY, AND YOU HAVEN'T EVEN LEARNED WHAT THIS HOUSE DEMANDS.

AND YOU SAY YOU WANT *TO BE WITH* TSUBAKI-SAN?

YOU WANT TO *MARRY* HIM?

HOW PITIFULLY UNDESERV-ING.

YOU REALLY HAVE *SOME* NERVE.

HOW AWFUL, KYOKO-SAN...

THAT YOU HAD TO GET SUCH A SHAMELESS DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.

I *KNOW*.

TUNK

IT'S NOT TOO LATE.

LEAVE THIS HOUSE *NOW*, FOR TSUBAKI-SAN'S SAKE.

HA HA HA

HA HA HA

HA HA HA

IT'S A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WORLD.

THEIR WORDS BELITTLE EVERYTHING I STAND FOR.

...IT'S NO USE.

NOW MATTER HOW MUCH PASSION I HAVE FOR WAGASHI...

WHY...?

LOOKS LIKE IT'S GONNA RAIN...

WHY CAN'T I...

...SAY ANYTHING BACK WHEN I FACE HER?

YOU SHOULD TREAT YOURSELF TO SOMETHING YUMMY.

I'LL DO THAT.

LATER, THEN...

YOU, TOO?

I'M EXHAUSTED FROM BEING TOLD MY BEAN PASTE'S NO GOOD OVER AND OVER!

I HAD THE EARLY SHIFT, SO I'M DONE FOR THE DAY.

THAT MADE ME JUMP...

J... JOJIMA-KUN.

ARE YOU ON YOUR LUNCH BREAK?

ACTUALLY...

NAO-SAN.

WOULD YOU COME WITH ME?

I'VE ALWAYS WANTED TO COME, BUT I FELT AWKWARD COMING ALONE AS A GUY.

YUP... JAPANESE AFTER-NOON TEA!

TH-THIS... IT'S JAPANESE... JAPANESE...

IT'S FUN, *PLUS* TASTY!

HAVING *WAGASHI* LIKE THIS ISN'T BAD.

RIGHT?!

LIKE COMING UP WITH *WAGASHI* THAT GO WITH ALCOHOL OR COFFEE.

THIS SHOP IS ALWAYS TRYING SOME-THING NEW,

THERE'S A WIDE AGE RANGE OF CUSTOMERS, TOO.

LIKE WHAT?

BUT IF IT WERE ME, I'D WANT TO INCLUDE A SEASONAL ITEM.

OH!

WITH JOJIMA-KUN,

I ONLY HAVE TO TALK ABOUT WAGASHI.

AND I'D SPRINKLE ON GOLD LEAF SHAPED LIKE STARS.

NAO-SAN, AT THIS PRICE, YOU'D BANKRUPT THE SHOP.

TRUE.

Hmm...

IT'S ALMOST TANABATA—THE STAR FESTIVAL...

SO MAYBE A MILKY WAY *KANTEN* IN PRETTY COLORS.

NICE.

HUH?

I'M GLAD.

WELL, I THOUGHT YOU LOOKED A LITTLE DOWN BACK THERE.

IT'S SO COMFORTING...

HE WAS TRYING TO CHEER ME UP...

STILL...

THANKS.

I THINK IT'S SUCH A WASTE...

THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE PROPRIETRESS.

HUH...?

MAYBE I *WAS* A LITTLE TIRED.

DON'T PUSH YOURSELF SO HARD.

VISITING THEM TO CHECK IN...

SENDING OUT SEASONAL GREETINGS...

SURE, THAT'S IMPORTANT WORK, TOO.

IF YOU BECOME KOGETSUAN'S PROPRI-ETRESS,

ALL YOU'D DO IS LOOK AFTER THE REGULARS.

BUT YOU'D SAY GOODBYE...

AND YOU LOVE IT SO MUCH.

...TO MAKING SWEETS.

BUT STILL...

I...

WELL, YEAH.

'CAUSE I'M JUST LIKE YOU.

YOU'RE PRETTY SHARP...

...JOJIMA-KUN.

YOU REMEM-BERED.

TAKE OVER THE FAMILY BUSINESS, RIGHT?

OH, YEAH. YOU'RE GOING TO...

O...

OUR SPECIALTY IS *WARABI MOCHI*, AND IT MELTS THE MOMENT YOU PUT IT IN YOUR MOUTH.

SO JIGGLY AND MELTY!

NO, *THE BEST IN ALL OF JAPAN!*

IT'S TINY, BUT IT'S THE BEST IN ISHIKAWA WHEN IT COMES TO TASTE...

THEN DO YOU WANNA TRY SOME?

HUH...?

MY FOLKS JUST SENT SOME OVER.

YOU COULD COME TO MY ROOM AFTER YOU FINISH WORK.

"JIGGLY AND MELTY"!

Wow...

I...I *SO* WANT TO EAT IT...

YOUR ROOM...?

...

IT'S A TINY ROOM.

OH.

THERE ARE SOME *KUCHINASHI*— GARDENIAS— BLOOMING OUTSIDE THE WINDOW RIGHT NOW, AND THEY'RE SUPER PRETTY.

IN THE FAR BACK,

IN THE CORNER.

BUT THERE'S A SEPARATE BUILDING WHERE ALL THE EMPLOYEES' ROOMS ARE.

YOU PROBABLY DON'T KNOW,

GARDENIAS IN BLOOM...

MOMMA...

GARDENIAS. DON'T THEY SMELL NICE?

WHAT ARE THESE FLOWERS CALLED?

THAT ROOM...

THAT...

MY *ROOM*? SORRY, I WASN'T THINKING.

JEEZ, WHAT AM I SAYING?!

COULD IT POSSIBLY BE...?

COULD IT...

YOU... WOULDN'T MIND?

...

...MIND?

SURE.

I'LL BE WAITING.

HAVE YOU SEEN NAO?

THANKS FOR ALL YOUR WORK.

...

I ALWAYS...

WANTED TO SEE IT AGAIN.

SHE CLEANED EVERY-THING UP...

AND FINISHED FOR THE DAY.

BUT...

...WHERE IT WAS IN THIS HUGE HOUSE...

...I JUST...

COULDN'T REMEMBER.

I'LL WHISH

!

LIKE THREADS UNRAVELING...

...MY MEMORY IS COMING BACK.

I'M SURE OF IT.

THIS IS THE ROOM.

Something's Wrong With Us

ARE YOU LOOKING FOR NAO-SAN?

CHAPTER 22
The Dream Shop

MOMMA ALWAYS READ ME BOOKS UNDER IT.

THAT WINDOW...

THIS TAKES ME BACK...

I LOVED SLEEPING IN HERE,

AND MOMMA WOULD SCOLD ME WHEN SHE CAME BACK FROM WORK.

光月

THAT'S RIGHT.

I MADE PLAYDOUGH SWEETS ALL THE TIME IN THAT CORNER THERE.

AND THIS DOOR'S A CLOSET.

I LEFT THAT WINDOW OPEN.

OH, SORRY.

I DIDN'T REALIZE IT WAS SUCH A SMALL ROOM...

KA-TUNK

LET ME CLOSE IT.

SST...

...BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT, NAO-SAN?

BA-DUMP

WELL...

IT'S FINICKY, AND YOU NEED TO LIFT IT ONCE TO CLOSE IT...

THAT WINDOW...

HUH?

TH-THE GARDENIAS ARE REALLY PRETTY.

THEY'RE IN FULL BLOOM.

SHOOT...

I'VE GOT TO WATCH MYSELF.

B... BECAUSE IT'S THE SAME IN MY ROOM.

I WOULD'VE THOUGHT THE MAIN HOUSE WAS BUILT BETTER.

HUH.

"KUCHINASHI" LITERALLY MEANS "NO MOUTH."

DID YOU KNOW?

HOW DO YOU KNOW ALL THAT, JOJIMA-KUN?

I'm surprised.

MY MOTHER LIKES THIS KIND OF THING.

"ROBE OF GOLDEN YELLOW... TO WHOM DO YOU BELONG?

NO ANSWER, FOR IT IS DYED WITH *KUCHI-NASHI.*"

"FALL PASSES AND WINTER COMES, AND STILL IT KEEPS ITS MOUTH SHUT."

THEY SAY THIS POEM GAVE THE FLOWER ITS NAME BECAUSE ITS SEEDS NEVER BURST OPEN.

I SEE.

HUSBAND AND WIFE TOGETHER, WOW...

SO OUR SHOP HAS LOTS OF SWEETS WITH FLOWER MOTIFS.

WHENEVER THE SEASONS CHANGE, SHE'S LIKE, "WHAT ABOUT *THIS* FLOWER AS A MOTIF?"

AND GIVES MY FATHER NEW IDEAS.

MY DREAM...

...IS TO HAVE A SHOP LIKE THAT, TOO.

THEN MY WIFE AND I WILL JUST LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND CHUCKLE.

WITH WEEKLY SEASONAL SWEETS...

...AND I'LL MAKE SURE EACH CUSTOMER GETS AN EXPLANATION BEFORE THEY EAT THE *WAGASHI*.

A FEW DAYS LATER, THEY'LL COME BACK ALL SMILES, SAYING THEY LIKED THAT SWEET THE OTHER DAY.

AND THAT WILL LEAD TO ANOTHER NEW SWEET.

A PLACE THAT'S SMALL,

BUT COZIER AND SWEETER THAN ANY SHOP OUT THERE.

ME, TOO...

...HOW WONDERFUL IT WOULD BE TO MAKE SWEETS THAT WAY...

I USED TO THINK...

YOUR FACE SAYS YOU HAVE THE SAME DREAM.

BUT...

I THINK IT'S GREAT.

THAT DREAM ...

YOU *HAVE* TO MAKE IT COME TRUE.

...THAT TSUBAKI-SAN'S RELATIONSHIPS NEVER LAST LONG.

THAT HE ALWAYS DUMPS THEM.

ONE OF THE LONGTIME CONFECTIONERS TOLD ME...

...TSUBAKI-SAN *DOESN'T,* DOES HE?

I OVERHEARD HIM BREAKING UP WITH A WOMAN ONCE, TOO.

SO?

WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY GIVE ME?

WHAT USE ARE YOU TO THE SHOP?

NOT WITH TSUBAKI-SAN.

YOU'LL NEVER BE HAPPY.

BUT WHAT ABOUT... WITH ME?

CLATTER

...MORE THAN ANYONE...

WHOOSH...

AH!

I KNOW.

I KNOW THAT...

TSU...

TSUBAKI-
SA...

I'M SORRY...

...BUT I HAVE A THING FOR NAO-SAN.

SHOULDN'T YOU BE PRACTICING ENCASING BEAN PASTE?

IF YOU HAVE THE TIME TO COVET SOMETHING THAT'S NOT YOURS...

FLUSH!!

WHAM

はっ
GASP

TSUBAKI!

...

NAO...

...HUH?

A *SAKURA* BLOSSOM ...?

NO, MORE LIKE A FLOWERING WEED.

COME ON.

...

SHE'S SO *PLAIN.*

WHAT DOES HE SEE IN HER?

HEY...

TSUBAKI-SAN...!

WAIT...

WHAT YOU DID TO JOJIMA-KUN...

...

IT'S SO UNLIKE YOU.

WHY DID *YOU* COME, TSUBAKI-SAN?

WHY DID YOU GO THERE?

I GOT PISSED OFF. WHAT CAN I SAY?

WHEN IT'S ABOUT HER...

...

...I CAN'T KEEP MY EMOTIONS IN CHECK.

!

...

OW!

TSUBA...

...!

MMF...

I DON'T THINK JOJIMA-KUN MEANT IT...

...

Hf...

...WHEN HE SAID HE LIKED ME.

THEN...

...THAT'S EVEN WORSE.

JOJIMA-KUN'S EYES BACK THERE...

...DIDN'T HAVE THAT ***LOOK.***

THEY WEREN'T LIKE TSUBAKI'S.

...HOW CAN YOU TELL?

IT'S JUST...

KIND OF A HUNCH.

...

I-
I DON'T KNOW IF THAT'S POSSIBLE.

WE WORK IN THE SAME KITCHEN.

WHO KNOWS WHAT HE'S UP TO?

STAY AWAY FROM HIM.

YOU GO AHEAD AND SLEEP.

I'M GOING TO GO COOL MY HEAD OFF.

BUT...

...I STILL WANT TO SEE THAT ROOM AGAIN.

TSUBAKI SAID TO STAY AWAY...

...BUT WHY WOULD JOJIMA-KUN DO SOME-THING LIKE THAT?

I WANT TO REMEMBER MORE...

...ABOUT MY DAYS THERE WITH MOMMA!

THAT NIGHT, TSUBAKI DIDN'T COME BACK TO THE ROOM UNTIL VERY LATE,

AND LEFT THE NEXT MORNING WITHOUT A WORD.

NAO-SAN.

JOJIMA-KUN.

OH...

YOU SHOULDN'T TALK TO ME.

HE'LL GET MAD AT YOU AGAIN.

OH.

UH...

THAT'S MY JOB. YOU'VE GOT TO PREP THE *AZUKI* BEANS.

BUT WHY ARE YOU WASHING UP...?

JOJIMA-KUN?

I'M LEAVING AT THE END OF THIS MONTH, SO...

TSUBAKI-SAN!

WHY IS JOJIMA-KUN GETTING FIRED?

DON'T DO THAT. PLEASE.

YOU'RE MAKING HIM LEAVE...?

光月

Nao Hanaoka's mother is a murderer

I'M SORRY...

...BUT I HAVE TO TERMINATE YOUR EMPLOY-MENT CON-TRACT.

PLEASE...!

YOU'RE AWFULLY DESPERATE.

HE WANTS TO TAKE OVER HIS PARENTS' SHOP.

THAT'S WHY HE'S WORKING SO HARD HERE...

A *DREAM?*

JOJIMA-KUN HAS A DREAM. DON'T TAKE THAT FROM HIM.

I DON'T NEED ANYONE WHO ISN'T OF USE TO THE SHOP.

THEN HE SHOULD GIVE UP WHILE HE CAN.

HE STILL CAN'T EVEN MAKE DECENT BEAN PASTE. HE DOESN'T HAVE THE KNACK FOR THIS.

THAT'S WHY HE'S—

BESIDES...

KOGETSUAN HAS NO PLACE FOR SILLY DREAMS.

THEN...

...

WHAT IF...

I SAID...

I WANT TO START A SHOP— JUST THE TWO OF US, HOW-EVER SMALL IT MIGHT BE.

WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

HMM...

...THAT DOESN'T SOUND BAD.

I COULD START A NEW SHOP FOR YOUR SAKE,

AND I'D BE THERE TO MAKE EVERYTHING YOU WANT TO DO COME TRUE.

DO YOU...

...REALLY EXPECT ME TO SAY SOMETHING LIKE THAT?

DON'T BE RIDICULOUS.

OKAY...

I SEE...

光月

Uniform: Kogetsu

TSUBAKI...

...FEELS FAR AWAY AGAIN...

光月

YOU SAID I COULD WEAR THIS...

...BUT I DON'T THINK I'M READY FOR IT QUITE YET.

AND NOW...

TUNK

...

YEAH ...?

TSUBAKI-SAN AND NAO-SAN...

...WERE ARGUING ABOUT YOU.

THAT YOUR DREAM IS TO TAKE OVER YOUR PARENTS' SHOP...?

WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

WHAT DID YOU TELL NAO-SAN?

FLAP

FLAP

BUT YOU SAID IT'S GONE, THAT IT WENT OUT OF BUSINESS A YEAR AGO.

YOU'RE WRONG, YAMAGUCHI-SAN.

LISTEN, JOJIMA.

I REALIZE YOU MADE A DEAL WITH THE PROPRIETRESS, BUT IF YOU NEED HELP...

IT DIDN'T GO OUT OF BUSINESS.

BECAUSE OF *HIM*...

IT WAS *PUT* OUT OF BUSINESS.

Something's Wrong With Us

CHAPTER 23

Shimaya in Noto

"DON'T BE RIDICULOUS."

HE'S HEARTLESS ENOUGH TO CUT SOMEONE OUT WITHIN THE SPAN OF A DAY.

I KNEW THAT.

SO WHY DID I GET MY HOPES UP?

YOU DID A GOOD JOB.

IN CASE YOU'VE FORGOT-TEN...

...MY ONLY GOAL IS TO RUIN YOUR SON.

THAT HASN'T CHANGED.

JUST MAKE SURE THEY DON'T GET MARRIED, WHATEVER HAPPENS.

Bill: 10,000 JPY = approx. 100 USD

YOU WON'T RUIN HIM THAT EASILY.

GO AHEAD AND TRY.

THE FAINT SMELL OF BOILING *AZUKI* BEANS...

OH...

IT'S SUCH A NICE SMELL,

DON'T YOU THINK?

光月

AND SHE DOESN'T CARE IF HER SON GETS HURT OVER THAT.

IT'S CHILLING.

光月

...

THE SMELL OF BEANS CRUMBLING APART...

...ACTUAL-LY...

I HATE IT...

Sign: Shimaya

IT WAS A SMALL SHOP, TUCKED A LITTLE WAYS AWAY FROM THE HOT SPRING DISTRICT IN NOTO.

EVER SINCE I CAN REMEMBER, I WOKE UP TO THAT SMELL EVERY MORNING.

...ON FIRST SNOW DAYS OF THE SEASON...

ON SWELTERING DAYS...

RAIN OR SHINE...

...THAT WERE SPECIAL TO ME...

...EVEN ON DAYS...

HUFF

HUFF

JOJIMA'S MOM IS SO SLOW!

WHY ISN'T HIS DAD RUNNING?

Test of Mathematic Competence: Recap Test

100

Grade 1 Class 2 Number 5 *Name:* YUSUKE JOJIMA

THAT'S AMAZING, YUSUKE.

AND THEN,

FOR READING AND WRITING–

I WAS THE ONLY ONE IN THE CLASS.

EVEN THE TEACHER WAS IM-PRESSED!

THUK
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BOTH WAGASHI AND THIS SHOP.
I HATE THEM.
HOLY SHIT, JOJIMA! YOU'RE RAKING IT IN!
LET'S GO TRADE THESE IN.
BET THEY'RE WORTH ABOUT 20,000 YEN.*
*About 200 USD
ALL RIGHT!
GUESS I GOT LUCKY.
CLINK
CLINK
CLINK
CLINK
BIG BONUS
BIG BONUS

Sign: Shimaya

CRAP.

AREN'T YOU ALL MINORS?

ONE OF THOSE GETS THEM 300 YEN*, TOPS.

HOW DO THEY KEEP AT IT? IT'S SO STUPID.

*About 3 USD

...MY LIFE WOULD'VE BEEN SO DIFFERENT.

IF I WAS BORN TO A RICHER FAMILY...

MWAHAHA

OW!

I'M TRASH!

I KNOW HIM.

HIS FOLKS RUN SHIMAYA.

REEKS OF BEAN PASTE.

OOPS.

SORRY.

THAT MISERA-BLE OLD *WAGASHI* SHOP!

TCH

THOCK!!

EEK!

JOJIMA, CUT IT OUT!

SUSPENDED FOR A MONTH?

JOJIMA'S SCREWED.

HE'S GONNA GET KICKED OUT FOR SURE.

BROKE HIS ARM, APPAR-ENTLY.

THE OTHER GUY'S THE SON OF SOME BIG SHOT ON THE PTA, RIGHT?

LISTEN, JOJIMA.

BEING ABLE TO ATTEND SCHOOL—YOU SHOULDN'T TAKE THAT FOR GRANTED.

NOT EXPELLED?

HIS PARENTS SAID THAT WOULD BE GOING TOO FAR.

I'M SICK AND TIRED...

...OF YOUR MOM COMING OVER EVERY FRIGGIN' DAY.

I'M SO VERY SORRY.

PLEASE, IT'S FINE.

MY SON WAS AT FAULT, TOO.

IT'S ALMOST ...

TIME FOR THE CAMELLIAS TO START BLOOMING.

WHY AREN'T YOU ANGRY WITH ME?

I...

BUT GUESS WHAT YOUR DAD ACTUALLY BROUGHT?

...I USED TO DREAM OF A PROPOSAL WITH A HUGE BOUQUET OF FLOWERS.

YOU KNOW...

...ALWAYS THOUGHT MY FOLKS WERE STUPID.

A WHOLE BOXFUL.

WAGASHI.

PLEASE, COME BE WITH ME.

I'M SORRY... IT'S ALL I'M GOOD AT...

IT WAS SO TRUE.

BUT I *PROMISE* TO MAKE YOU HAPPY.

SERI-OUSLY...

THAT'S ALL I'VE GOT.

AND I LOVE THAT.

BUT IT'S THANKS TO THAT WE CAN WARM OURSELVES WITH SCARVES ON COLD DAYS LIKE THIS.

I'M SORRY, YUSUKE!

IT'S ALL MY FAULT.

I KNEW YOU FELT NEGLECTED A LOT...

ALL HE DID WAS MAKE SWEETS FROM MORNING TO NIGHT.

HE DIDN'T DRINK OR SMOKE...

EVEN IF HIS NAILS GOT DEFORMED FROM BURNS,

HE SAID EVEN A GLANCE AWAY FROM THE POT WOULD RUIN THE TEXTURE OF THE *MOCHI*...

...AND STAYED BY THAT STOVE.

...BUT THAT'S THE MAN I FELL IN LOVE WITH.

WHEW ...

OOF...

I HATE WAGASHI.

I HATE IT.

THAT'S AMAZING, YUSUKE.

...

IT'S NOT EASY.

I KNOW THAT.

TEACH ME HOW TO MAKE BEAN PASTE.

HEY, WHEN I GRADUATE FROM HIGH SCHOOL,

I'M SO SORRY, YUSUKE.

SORRY...

はっ
GASP

R

THIS SHOP IS DONE FOR-

RRRRRR

I GUESS I FELL ASLEEP.

HELLO.

YES.

I KNOW. I'M COMING NOW.

XX XXXX XXXX

...SO I LET HIM OFF EARLY.

JOJIMA SAID HE WASN'T FEELING WELL...

I WONDER IF HE'S IN HIS ROOM.

I JUST WANT TO CHECK ON HIM.

ｽｽﾄ

!!

...

JOJIMA-KUN...

OH IT'S YOU, NAO-SAN.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

U-UM, ARE YOU FEELING OKAY?

I THOUGHT SOME *YUZU* TEA MIGHT BE GOOD IF YOU'RE QUEASY.

WOW, THAT'S NICE OF YOU.

OH.

WHY DON'T YOU HAVE SOME, TOO, IN MY ROOM?

!

REALLY?!

OHHH, THAT'S RIGHT. I'M ABOUT TO HEAD OUT, SO MAYBE ANOTHER TIME.

SHE DIDN'T HESITATE THE FIRST TIME, EITHER.

*WHAT'S **WRONG** WITH HER?*

BYE FOR NOW.

IS SHE SERIOUS?

1-2!! WHIP?

10 PLOP

JOJIMA-KUN, YOU DROPPED SOMETH—

TH-THIS IS NOTHING.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.

...GOING TO LEAVE THE SHOP, ARE YOU?

YOU'RE NOT...

...SEEING MYSELF IN JOJIMA-KUN.

I CAN'T HELP...

...

I SURE HOPE NOT.

EXCUSE ME.

I'M NOT SURPRISED...

...BUT EVEN KOGETSUAN'S TEA IS EXCEP-TIONAL.

I'M SO SORRY I KEPT YOU WAITING.

WAIT, IS IT JUST YOU TODAY, TSUBAKI-SAN?

I'M HONORED THAT IT'S TO YOUR SATISFACTION, KITAGAWA-SAN.

WHAT ABOUT THE YOUNG PROPRI-ETRESS?

I'VE HAD THREE CUPS ALREADY.

MY APOLO-GIES.

SHE HAS SOME WORK SHE CAN'T GET AWAY FROM.

...

THIS IS MATSUBARA-SAN FROM THE OTOWA DEPARTMENT STORE.

I DID.

LET ME INTRODUCE YOU.

I WANTED TO MEET HER.

TOO BAD.

SO YOU CAME FOR BUSINESS TODAY?

I'M FROM THE SALES PLANNING DIVISION.

WE'RE ACTUALLY PLANNING A *WAGASHI* EVENT SOON,

AND I WAS HOPING KOGETSUAN WOULD PARTICIPATE.

WE CALL IT THE TANABATA *WAGASHI* FAIR,

AND EACH SHOP WILL PREPARE THEIR PRIZE *WAGASHI*.

WE'LL HAVE CUSTOMERS TRY THEM AND CHOOSE A FAVORITE ONE TO VOTE FOR.

ULTIMATELY, THE SWEET WITH THE MOST VOTES WILL BE SOLD AT OUR BRANCHES NATIONWIDE.

IF I'M NOT MISTAKEN, KOGETSUAN PARTICIPATED IN AN EVENT AT YOTSUKOSHI DEPARTMENT STORE THREE YEARS AGO.

THAT WAS THE FIRST TIME I ATE A SWEET FROM KOGETSUAN, AND I FELL IN LOVE.

The New Wagashi Prince
e incredible, believably delicate samigiku
subaki Takatsuki
"THE YOUNG HEIR TO KOGETSUAN."
"THE PRINCE OF THE *WAGASHI* INDUSTRY."

SHIMAYA—

THAT WAS JUST THE MEDIA GOING OVER-BOARD.

I REMEM-BER...

...A SMALL SHOP FROM NOTO WAS THERE, TOO.

I THINK IT WAS CALLED ...

MAYBE I SHOULDN'T HAVE FOLLOWED HIM ALL THE WAY HERE...

WHO'S THAT...?

DID YOU WAIT LONG?

THAT'S ALL I HAVE FOR NOW.

THIS...

...AIN'T NEARLY ENOUGH.

HMPH!!!

THOCK

OR...

YOU THINK YOU CAN MUCK AROUND WHEN YOU OWE MONEY?

I COULD GO PAY YOUR SWEET MOMMY A VISIT, Y'KNOW.

TRK TRK TRK...

WE RECEIVED A REQUEST TO BUY THE BUILDING AND THE LAND.

YES.

THAT SHOP...

...!

YOU MEAN ...

...

SLAM

IT CLOSED DOWN, APPARENTLY.

SHIMAYA?

HE'S A VALUABLE CONFEC-TIONER.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?

Something's Wrong With Us

CHAPTER 24
Jojima's Past

DON'T GET ME WRONG, LADY.

I JUST WANT TO COLLECT THE MONEY HE OWES US.

HIS SHOP'S DEEP IN DEBT.

YOU'LL HEAR FROM ME AGAIN.

I HAD NO IDEA YOU FOLLOWED ME!

MAN, YOU STARTLED ME.

JOJIMA-K...

YOU POPPED OUT OF NOWHERE.

DEBT...?

JOJIMA-KUN!!

HE MEANS YOUR PARENTS' SHOP, RIGHT?

IT'S IN TROUBLE ...?

DID SOMETHING HAPPEN?

JOJIMA-KUN?

DECEASED

ILL?

WE BORROWED SOME CASH FOR MAINTE-NANCE FEES,

BUT IT'S TOUGH KEEPING UP WITH THE PAYMENTS.

...MY FATHER'S ILL.

TO TELL YOU THE TRUTH...

SO THE SHOP'S CLOSED FOR NOW...

OH, HEY!

I JUST WANTED AN EXCUSE...

TO INVITE YOU OVER.

SORRY I LIED AND SAID I HAD *WARABI MOCHI* IN MY ROOM.

THEN MAYBE YOU COULD BORROW FROM A LESS SKETCHY PLACE...

NOT MANY PLACES ARE WILLING TO LEND TO SUCH A SMALL SHOP.

TH-THEN WHAT IF YOU GO BACK AND—

IT'S NO USE.

WE WON'T GET ANY CUSTOMERS WITHOUT OUR SIGNATURE *WARABI MOCHI*.

AND ONLY MY FATHER CAN MAKE THAT.

I CAN'T...

...TALK ABOUT IT WITH TSUBAKI, EITHER.

JOJIMA-KUN'S HIDING SOMETHING.

BUT...

I DOUBT I CAN GET HIM TO TELL ME ANY MORE.

MY DREAM IS TO HAVE A SHOP LIKE THAT, TOO.

...I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE HE WAS LYING.

THE DREAM JOJIMA-KUN TALKED ABOUT...

...BUT...

MAYBE IT'S JUST WHAT I WANT TO THINK...

I'M SURE HE REALLY FEELS THAT WAY.

Sign: Kogetsuan

THUK

THUK

THUK

THUK

THUK

THUK

THAT...

I KNOW IT, FROM SOME-WHERE...

THAT SOUND...

PERFECT TIMING. CAN YOU TASTE THIS?

I TRIED MAKING SOME *WARABI MOCHI.*

I WANT YOU TO TELL ME HOW IT'S DIFFERENT FROM YOUR FATHER'S.

OH!

JOJIMA-KUN.

光月

...

WHAT...?

IT'S COMPLETELY DIFFERENT...

MY FATHER'S *WARABI MOCHI* HAS A NOTICEABLE TEXTURE DESPITE BEING SO SOFT.

WHEN YOU LIFT IT WITH A TOOTHPICK, IT STRETCHES REALLY WELL, BUT NEVER BREAKS...

HOW IS IT?

SOFT, BUT WITH TEXTURE...

IF I UP THE WATER-TO-POWDER RATIO, IT'LL GET SOFTER...

...BUT THEN THE SUGAR...

...

WELL, I SUPPOSE...

...THAT'LL KEEP HER FOCUSED ON ME.

WHAT, IS SHE...

...TRYING TO RECREATE MY DAD'S WARABI MOCHI*?*

COME ON.

FALL FOR ME ALREADY.

I'LL HELP.

GO AHEAD AND ASK ME ANYTHING.

PRIZE WAGASHI, HUH...?

THE TANABATA SWEETS...

SCRUNCH...

CENTRAL HOSPITAL?

I'M NOT GOING TO LET HIM MESS WITH US ANYMORE.

CENTRAL HOSPITAL

21

AKIKO JOJIMA

CENTRAL HOSPITAL

I LOOKED INTO IT SINCE YOU SEEMED CONCERNED.

SHIMAYA.

IT'S YUSUKE JOJIMA'S HOME, ALL RIGHT.

AND HIS MOTHER'S IN THAT HOSPITAL RIGHT NOW.

CENTRAL HOSPITAL

ARE YOU AKIKO JOJIMA-SAN?

EXCUSE ME.

...FROM KOGETSUAN...!

TSU...

I'M—

NICE TO MEET YOU.

TSUBAKI-SAN...

I'M SORRY.

U-UM, DID YUSUKE...

DID MY SON DO SOME-THING?

YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

I'M SO SORRY!

I TOLD HIM TO FORGET ABOUT THE SHOP!

THAT BLAMING YOU WON'T BRING HIS FATHER BACK...

...BLAME?

I THOUGHT HE WAS AFTER NAO.

DID I HAVE IT ALL WRONG?

SHIMAYA...

AND WE WERE JUST BARELY HANGING BY A THREAD.

TRENDY DESSERTS AND CONVENIENCE STORE SWEETS WERE PUSHING US ASIDE...

OUR OLDER REGULARS WEREN'T COMING AS OFTEN...

...HAD BEEN STRUGGLING TO MAKE ENDS MEET FOR QUITE A WHILE.

I BORROWED IT. WE NEEDED IT TO CREATE SOME NEW ITEMS.

BUT *THIS* MUCH?!

DEAR!

WHERE DID YOU GET THIS MONEY?

MSGGG Bank

SAVINGS ACCOUNT PASSBOOK

HE DIDN'T WANT THE SHOP TO CLOSE DOWN, NO MATTER WHAT.

SO HE WORKED EVEN HARDER THAN BEFORE...

IT WAS HIS EVERYTHING.

DON'T WORRY, WE'LL PAY IT BACK SOON ENOUGH.

WE'LL SELL OUR *WARABI MOCHI!* IT'S OUR BEST SHOT!!

YES!

BUT IF WE GET THE MOST SALES, THEY SAY THEY'LL CARRY OUR SWEETS ALL YEAR ROUND.

IT'S JUST FOR A DAY,

THAT WAS WHEN WE GOT AN OFFER THAT WAS A BIG DEAL FOR US.

AN EVENT AT YOTSUKOSHI DEPARTMENT STORE?!

IT WAS ONE OF THE RARE TIMES THE OLD MASTER PUT ME IN CHARGE.

I REMEMBER THE YOTSUKOSHI JOB.

BUT...

WAGASHI FAIR

GRAPE DAIFUKU BEAN

...AND MY SON AND I DECIDED TO PUT ALL OUR HOPES IN THAT EVENT. WE WERE DESPERATE PREPARING FOR IT.

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FOREVER, MY HUSBAND SMILED...

BUT I *DID* STACK THEM PROPERLY...

THEY *COULDN'T* HAVE FALLEN OVER BY THEMSELVES!

WHAT HAPPENED HERE?!

LET'S PUT THE BALLOON FLOWER SWEETS WE BROUGHT IN FRONT FOR NOW.

HURRY.

WHY DIDN'T YOU STACK THEM PROPERLY?

I'M SORRY, WHEN THE STAFF TOLD ME, AND I CAME BACK...

KOGETSUAN

AND IT'S MADE BY A CONFEC-TIONER IN HIS TEENS!

LOOK! KOGETSUAN'S *HASAMIGIKU.*

HOW'S THAT EVEN POSSI-BLE?!

IT'S *SO* PRETTY!

PLEASE, GIVE US ANOTHER CHANCE!

SHIMAYA ONLY SOLD THREE SWEETS THAT DAY...

NO TO SHI MA YA

SHIMAYA

IF WE COULD HAVE SOLD THAT...

JUST TRY OUR *WARABI MOCHI.*

WHAT'S ALL THIS FUSS?

THAT'S OBVIOUS, AND YOU CAN'T EVEN MANAGE THAT. NO WONDER YOU'RE SECOND-RATE.

YOU PRESENT THE BEST THAT YOU CAN OFFER...

WHEN THE CUSTOMER'S THERE TO EAT IT.

DAMN IT!

A FUKUSA ?

IT'S NOT OURS...

FWIP

WHO WAS IT?!

WHO WOULD *DO* THIS?!

光月

Cloth: Kogetsu

ONE MORNING, HE COLLAPSED IN THE KITCHEN, AND THAT WAS IT...

HE WAS DRAINED BOTH MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY.

WITH NO WAY TO PAY OUR DEBTS, I THINK MY HUSBAND FELL INTO DESPAIR.

I'M SO SORRY, YUSUKE...

SORRY...

...THAT I COULDN'T LEAVE YOU THE SHOP.

THAT'S THE HIP BONE...

PLEASE PICK HIS BONES UP FOR HIM.

CRAKL...

!!

I SMELL IT...

THE SMELL OF BEANS CRUMBLING APART...

I THINK...

...THAT'S WHEN...

光自

Cloth: Kogetsu

...SOMETHING INSIDE MY SON SNAPPED.

PLEASE!

...

I'M BEGGING YOU.

I WANT HIM TO JUST ENJOY MAKING SWEETS.

PLEASE KICK HIM OUT OF YOUR SHOP.

BEFORE HE DOES SOMETHING.

...ARE SO DESPERATE...

HER EYES...

BLAME ME, TOO?

DON'T YOU...

...

...I...

...JUST DON'T KNOW...

I NEVER KNEW A MOTHER COULD CARE THIS MUCH ABOUT HER SON...

THE *HASAMIGIKU* YOU MADE...

I HAVE TROUBLE BELIEVING SOMEONE WHO COULD MAKE THAT COULD DO SUCH A THING...

IT WAS SO BEAUTIFUL.

WHY...

ARE YOU HERE...?

YOURS OR MINE...

WHOSE WORDS...

DO YOU THINK NAO-SAN WILL BELIEVE?

HOLD IT!

YOURS, PROBABLY.

NOT BECAUSE
I LOVE HER.

I THINK
YOU'VE GOT
ME WRONG.

I'M
GOING
TO MARRY
HER...

ONLY
BECAUSE
I THINK
SHE'LL BE
OF USE TO
THE SHOP.

I JUST CAN'T HELP...

...SEEING MYSELF IN JOJIMA-KUN.

BUT...

HOT!

THIS IS FOR MY OWN SATISFAC-TION.

I REALLY DO WANT JOJIMA-KUN TO MAKE HIS DREAM COME TRUE.

Something's Wrong With Us

IT WASN'T MADE WITH JUST WARABI *POWDER. I'M SURE LOTUS ROOT STARCH WAS USED TO HOLD THE* MOCHI *TOGETHER.*

SHIMAYA'S WARABI MOCHI *WAS ALMOST FLUID, EVEN WHEN CHILLED.*

FOLDING THE MIXTURE WITH A PADDLE WON'T GET US THE VISCOSITY WE NEED, SO WE NEED TO STIR IT IN CIRCLES.

AND THEN IT COMES DOWN TO WORKING IT PROPERLY.

WE NEED THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE AMOUNT OF WATER...

CHAPTER 25
A Sign

NAO-SAN, YOU LOOK KIND OF PALE. HAVE YOU BEEN GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP?

IT'S OKAY, YOU'VE DONE ENOUGH.

I SEE...

IT HAS A BETTER TEXTURE, BUT NOW IT'S TOO FIRM.

BUT I GUESS I WORKED IT ENOUGH...?

MAYBE THE HEAT WAS TOO STRONG.

...

I'M FINE.

LET ME TRY JUST A BIT MORE.

光月

WHISH

I NEED TO DETERMINE WHEN TO TAKE IT OFF THE STOVE.

THUK

THUK

THUK

!

NAO-SAN!

OH...

WH...

...

YOU'RE SUCH A FOOL.

IT'S TIME TO START WORK.

FWIP ぱっ

I-I'LL CLEAN UP RIGHT AWAY.

BUT...

THIS IS THE ONLY THING I CAN THINK TO DO FOR JOJIMA-KUN.

GWIM

GWIM

I GET WHAT TSUBAKI'S TRYING TO SAY.

THERE'S NO POINT IN DOING THIS.

...

I'M SORRY...

THE OUTER LAYERS...

THEY'RE ALL UNEVEN. DO THEM OVER.

JOJIMA.

...

JOJIMA-KUN.

SORRY.

IF YOU HAVE A MOMENT, COULD YOU TASTE THESE AGAIN?

HOW LONG IS SHE GONNA KEEP THIS UP?

I THOUGHT SHE'D GIVE UP AFTER A WEEK.

I WISH SHE'D JUST—

HOW IS IT?

HOW'S THE SOFTNESS?

...

IT'S CLOSE. INCREDIBLY CLOSE...

ACTUALLY ...

...IT'S PRETTY MUCH...

I TRIED TO RECREATE MY DAD'S WARABI MOCHI SO MANY TIMES.

WHY...?

BUT...

光月

SO IT'S ALMOST SMOOTH ENOUGH?

I THOUGHT I WAS A TAD EARLY TURNING DOWN THE HEAT...

I'LL WATCH OUT FOR THAT. THANKS.

THERE'S JUST NO WAY.

THEN YOU CAN REOPEN YOUR SHOP...

...AND MAKE SURE YOU ACHIEVE YOUR DREAM SOMEDAY.

...I CAN'T.

I THINK THERE'S A TRICK TO CONTROLLING THE HEAT.

BUT ONCE I GET IT, I'M SURE YOU'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE IT, TOO.

STOP THIS, WON'T YOU?

I THINK *YOU'RE* THE ONE WHO IS, THOUGH.

ABOUT WANTING TO ACHIEVE THAT DREAM...

I'M NOT ACTUALLY SERIOUS...

A SMALL BUT COZY SHOP?

I KNOW THAT.

THAT'S NOT ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU HAPPY IN REAL LIFE.

DON'T FORCE YOUR IDEALS ON ME.

TUNK / / °

SORRY. PLEASE, JUST GO REST.

...

I KNEW IT.

OF COURSE HE'D SAY THAT...

CENTRAL HOSPITAL

⑫ Cashier

PLEASE PAY YOUR HOSPITAL-IZATION FEE HERE.

GUESS I'LL BORROW FROM THE PROPRI-ETRESS AGAIN.

CAN I PAY FOR IT ALL NEXT MONTH?

SORRY.

I BROUGHT A CHANGE OF CLOTHES.

WHAT'S THAT?

A LETTER?

THE MONEY WE BOR-ROWED...

IT'S ALL BEEN PAID FOR...

HUH?

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? THAT CAN'T BE—

BUT THAT'S WHAT THIS MEANS, ISN'T IT?

IT LOOKS LIKE WE DON'T OWE ANYTHING ANYMORE.

LOOK, A CERTIFICATE OF FULL PAYMENT!

Jojima

CERTIFICATE
FULL PAYMEN

NDER": YK Card
OWER": Akiko J
loan agreeme
October 31,
paid in fu

2-49 XX Town, Kanazawa City,
Ishikawa Prefecture
YK Card

No.001243

CATE OF
PAYMENT

NDER"
ROW
r the
op

Kanazawa City,
Ishikawa Prefecture
YK Card

BUT WHO WOULD HAVE—

WHAT...?

Card
kiko Joji
tement
31
full

Town, Kanazawa City,
Ishikawa Prefecture
YK Card

SLAM!

WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?!

I NEVER ASKED YOU TO DO THIS FOR ME!

IT'S FAIR PAYMENT.

THAT'S...

...NOT WHAT I INTENDED.

I'M WORK-ING.

ARE YOU EVEN LISTEN-ING?!

I'M SAYING I DON'T WANT SOME *HANDOUT* FROM YOU!

IF WE DO, IT WILL SELL FOR SURE.

I'M GOING TO ENTER THAT *WARABI MOCHI*... IN THE OTOWA DEPARTMENT STORE EVENT.

I JUST PAID THE PROFIT FROM THAT IN ADVANCE TO ITS RIGHTFUL OWNER.

FOR NOW, MAYBE.

"ENTER IT"...?

BUT IT'S NOT EVEN FINISHED YET.

BUT NAO WILL FIGURE IT OUT, FOR SURE.

I ENVIED HOW AMAZING IT WAS.

I REMEMBER THAT MUCH.

I GOT CURIOUS AFTER IT WAS OVER...

THREE YEARS AGO, AT THE YOTSUKOSHI EVENT...

...AND TASTED THE SAMPLE *WARABI MOCHI* FROM SHIMAYA.

ANYWAY, TAKE YOUR MONEY BACK.

I DON'T NEED YOUR HELP.

...

OH, ***REALLY.***

AFTER WHAT YOU DID?

WHY DON'T *YOU* TELL NAO-SAN...

IT'S SO OBVIOUS...

THAT YOU DON'T WANT TO HURT HER.

...THAT SHIMAYA'S LONG GONE AND THERE'S NO POINT ANYMORE?

EVEN THOUGH YOU DO THE PROPRIETRESS'S BIDDING FOR CASH?

...

WHAT'S...

THIS EVENT AT OTOWA DEPARTMENT STORE...?

I'M JUST ABOUT TO GO CHECK THE VENUE OUT.

YOU CAN COME ALONG IF YOU WANT.

OTOWA

TANABATA FAIR ON NOW

WOW.

...

A-AREN'T WE GOING TO THE EVENT VENUE?

THEY'RE STILL SETTING UP.

APPARENTLY THE CUSTOMERS ALWAYS STOP HERE,

SO I WANTED TO SEE IT.

OTOWA IS FAMOUS FOR ITS TANABATA EVENT,

BUT I DIDN'T KNOW THE WHOLE ROOFTOP WAS DECORATED, TOO.

I'VE NEVER BEEN HERE, EITHER.

PLEASE WRITE A WISH AND HANG IT OVER THERE.

OR YOU COULD JUST WRITE YOUR NAME.

WOULD YOU LIKE ONE?

...

...

SURE, I GUESS.

...NOW...

BEFORE, "LEARNING THE TRUTH ABOUT MOMMA" WOULD HAVE COME BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE.

BUT...

A WISH...

"A SHOP— JUST THE TWO OF US"...

...IT SOUNDS *RIDICULOUS* TO YOU, BUT

WHY WOULD YOU NEED MY APPROVAL OR MY HELP?

EVEN ON YOUR OWN, YOU'LL MAKE IT HAPPEN.

YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES TO CONFRONT ME AND THE OLD MASTER.

YOU CAN COOK UP ANY KIND OF TASTY BEAN PASTE YOU IMAGINE.

THAT'S THE KIND OF WOMAN YOU ARE...

...THE WOMAN I FELL FOR.

"BELIEVE IN YOUR-SELF"...

...AND MAKE IT COME TRUE."

I NEEDED THOSE WORDS.

WHO THOUGHT I'D HEAR THEM FROM TSUBAKI...?

TSUBAKI-SAN?!

I'VE REALLY GOT TO GET IT DONE...

THAT WARABI MOCHI...

IS THIS THE PERSO—

THIS IS NAO.

THIS IS MATSUBARA-SAN FROM OTOWA.

NICE TO MEET YOU.

YOU'RE HERE ALREADY?!

THERE'S STILL TIME UNTIL OUR MEETING, ISN'T THERE?

YOU HAVE SUCH A HANDSOME HUSBAND.

I HAVE TO GO FIND THE TRASH BIN.

MATSUBARA-SAN...!!

SHE'S SO PRETTY...

SHE SMELLS NICE, TOO...

SNIFF

SOME KIND OF PERFUME...

O-OH, NOT AT ALL!

DID I INTERRUPT SOME-THING?

N...

NAO-SAN?!

UHK...

OH, NAO-SAN...

!!!

...ALL OF A SUDDEN...?

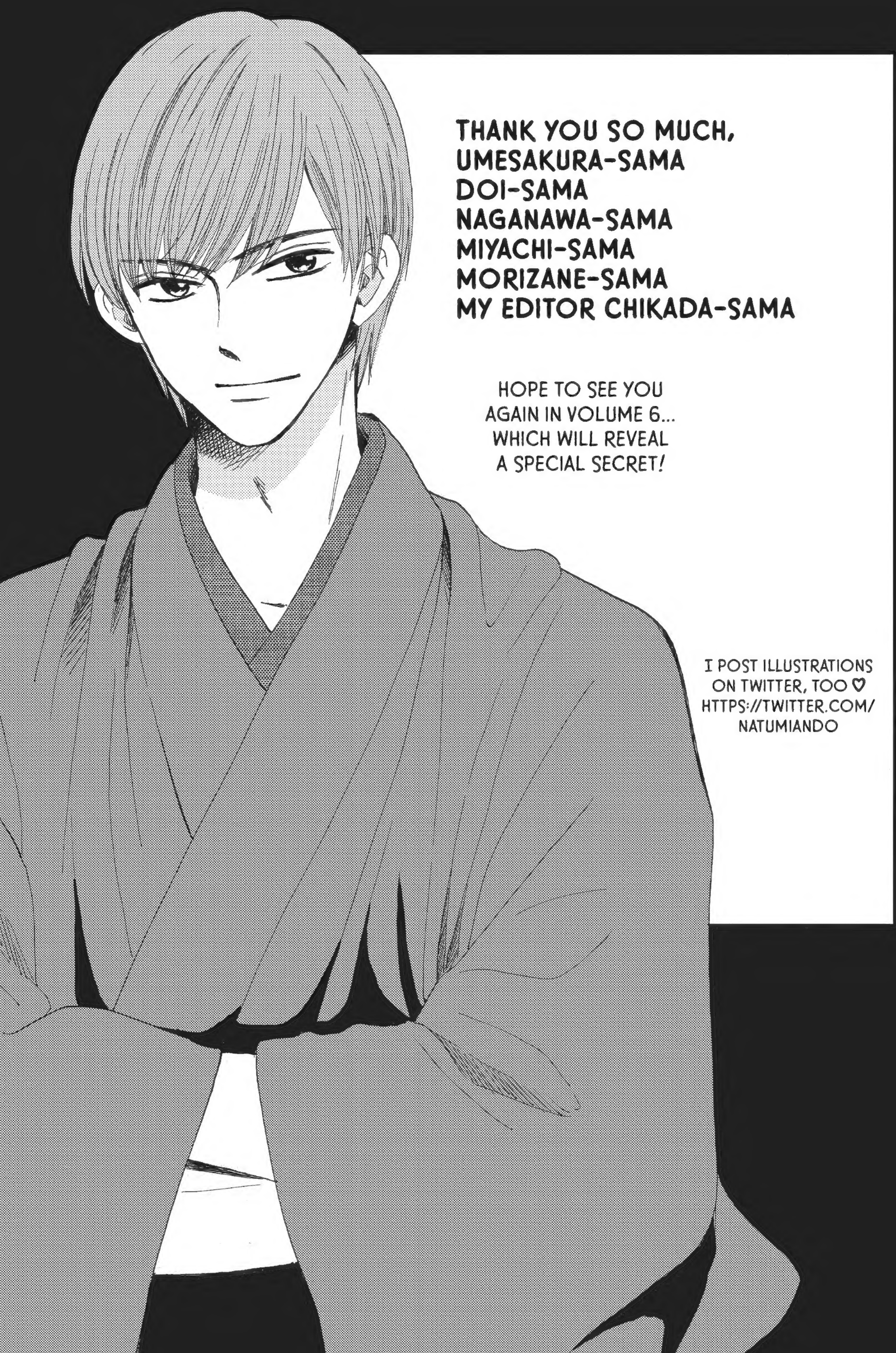
!

WHAT'S THIS...

ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?

...DO YOU HAVE A BABY ON THE WAY?

To be continued in Volume 6.



THANK YOU SO MUCH,
UMESAKURA-SAMA
DOI-SAMA
NAGANAWA-SAMA
MIYACHI-SAMA
MORIZANE-SAMA
MY EDITOR CHIKADA-SAMA

HOPE TO SEE YOU
AGAIN IN VOLUME 6...
WHICH WILL REVEAL
A SPECIAL SECRET!

I POST ILLUSTRATIONS
ON TWITTER, TOO ♡
HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/
NATUMIANDO

Translation Notes

Summer Oshima fabric, page 19

A silk textile made on Amami Oshima Island in the south of Japan. Dyed with the island's natural mud, it has been considered one of the finest kimono textiles available from as early as the 18th century. The summer version has an airier weave that breathes well.

ori kimono, page 19

Also called *sakizome*, this type of kimono is made by dyeing the thread beforehand and creating patterns through the weaving process. The other type, *some*, or *atozome*, is made by weaving white fabric first and dyeing designs on it afterwards.

A new cup of tea means you want them to hurry up and leave, page 21 - 22

While not typical in ordinary households, there can be proper tea serving etiquette that can insult guests if not followed properly, depending on the region and formality levels.

Tanabata, page 24

Also known as the Star Festival, this festival is held around July based on the legend of Otohime (Vega) and Hikoboshi (Altair), two celestial lovers separated by the Milky Way who are only allowed to meet once a year. On the day, people make wishes by writing them on slips of paper to be hung on bamboo.

kanten, page 29

A jelly made with an algae-based coagulant called agar. It has a higher melting point than gelatin and holds its shape better.

Ishikawa, page 32

Ishikawa is the prefecture in which Kogetsuan is located.

warabi mochi, page 32

A jelly-like dessert made with starch from the *warabi* fern, usually enjoyed in the summer with *kinako* (soybean powder) and *kuromitsu* (black sugar syrup).

encasing bean paste, page 51
One of the fundamental techniques in *wagashi* making, which involves encasing a small ball of bean paste in an even outer layer of different colored bean paste.

sakura, page 52
Sakura is the Japanese cherry, and the second character in Nao's name.

medal coin game, page 76
Unlike the coin games in arcades that are just for fun, Jojima is playing a kind of slot machine where the coins can be traded for money. Since this is a form of gambling, minors aren't allowed in the store.

yuzu tea, page 89
Yuzu is a type of citrus fruit used for its pleasant aroma in both savory dishes and sweets. The "tea" is like a warm lemonade made from *yuzu* marmalade dissolved in hot water.

hasamigiku, page 93
A delicate chrysanthemum (*kiku*) motif made by cutting each petal out with a special pair of clippers, or *hasami*.

fukusa, page 118
A traditional piece of silk cloth used for gift giving and in tea ceremonies.

picking bones up, page 120
In Japanese funerals after the body is cremated, close family members use metal chopsticks to place a few of the major bones into the urn together.

Something's Wrong With Us 5

KODANSHA COMICS Digital Edition

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